

strategized, is being pushed. The grassroots organizations that are pushing for this legislation are pushing it because they are part of the anti-abortion part of this country's population.

The reason they do that is because for the last 30 years abortion has been legal in this country and because the courts have said that, particularly in the early stages of a woman's pregnancy, the choice of what to do with that pregnancy is hers. It is well-established law.

How do you defeat that? You do not bring an amendment to the floor to change the Constitution in that regard. That is not popular in this country. So we bring bills like this, which are designed to come in the back door, and try to define a fetus as a human being, a full person.

This is brought here for the purpose of abortion politics to establish in law under the guise, under the obviously compelling notion that we want to protect women against violence, when its purpose is really quite otherwise.

If those Members who are really interested in solving this problem will support the Lofgren amendment, this really does get tough on those who would assault a pregnant woman; it does get tough, and does not have the ulterior motive of trying to play abortion politics with something as critical as a woman's assault.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LATOURETTE). The Chair would remind all Members that it is not appropriate under the rules of the House to refer to our guests in the gallery.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. BRYANT).

Mr. BRYANT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding time to me.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly support this bill. One of the reasons to address a comment made by the prior speaker about there are not crimes like this being committed out there, I want to cite the March edition of the Journal of the American Medical Association, which published a study revealing that the leading cause of death among pregnant women in the State of Maryland was not health-related ailments, but rather, murder.

This is not simply a case that might occur on Federal property, but it covers a range of potential offenses where it is important for that unborn child to be recognized, and if injured or killed, appropriate punishment be given for that unborn child as well as the pregnant mother. In kidnapping cases, that is a Federal offense; in drug deals gone bad, bank robberies, and even the most recent example of Oklahoma City and the terrorism there, and the fact that there were three unborn children killed in that.

This type of violent act is exactly what H.R. 503 is designed to hopefully deter. We can maybe deter some of these offenses from taking place, and if necessary, if they occur, to appropriately punish them.

This bill will correct the failure of both Federal and military law to treat a criminal assault against a pregnant woman as an additional crime perpetrated against the unborn child. Currently, as has been said numerous times today, even one who purposely kills an unborn child, who sets out to kill that unborn child, has not committed a Federal crime, as the law now stands.

Let me make three additional points, if I could, very quickly. This is not an abortion vote. The sky is not falling on the issue of pro-choice pro-life. I do not understand why people come up here and stand and say that this is an abortion vote. I respect their opinion; but in reading the bill, I do not understand it.

Someone maybe can connect the dots for me on this, because if this bill is wrong, it is unconstitutional. It does not square with Roe v. Wade. This bill is not going to overturn Roe v. Wade; this bill will be held unconstitutional with Roe v. Wade being cited. So if there is a problem there, this bill is not going to overturn Roe v. Wade. It will be the other way around.

This act specifically excludes abortion, an abortion procedure consented to by the mother. It also specifically excludes any action by the mother which results in harm to the unborn child. So all these South Carolina cases and other cases that have been cited would not apply here. They are not covered.

To me, it should not matter whether one is pro-choice or pro-life, one ought to be able to support this bill. As has been mentioned several times already, this definition is something that is not new to this House. Last year we voted 417-0 to prohibit the death penalty being given to a pregnant woman. We use that same definition.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to remind my friend, who is a former member of the Committee on the Judiciary, who assured us that Roe v. Wade was not under attack, well, most people understand that it is under attack. That is why the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League is opposed, Planned Parenthood Federation of America is opposed, the National Abortion Federation is opposed, the National Women's Law Center is opposed.

Does the gentleman think they do not understand this bill very much? I think they do.

The National Partnership for Women and Families, they are opposed. The Center for Reproductive Law and Policy, they are opposed. The American Civil Liberties Union, they are opposed. The Feminist Majority, they are opposed. The American Association of University Women, they are opposed. The National Family Planning and Reproductive Health Association, they are opposed. The American Women's Medical Association, they are opposed.

The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, they are opposed. The National Council of Jewish Women, they are opposed. The National Organization for Women, they are opposed. The Physicians for Reproductive Choice in Health, they are opposed. The People for the American Way, they are opposed.

Now, they do not understand what the Members are trying to do, do they? They do not get it? They have misunderstood the bill of the gentleman from South Carolina? All of these organizations, a dozen of them, they should relax, Roe v. Wade is not under attack. The gentleman in the well on the Republican side just told us so. It is okay. Relax.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY).

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding time to me.

Mr. Speaker, I stand here today in opposition to H.R. 503.

As the mother of a pregnant daughter and the mother-in-law of a pregnant daughter-in-law, a proud grandmother of Isabel and Eve, the sense that somehow I do not understand the incredible mystery and magic and holiness of a pregnancy because I do not support this legislation, I really resent that very much.

We look forward in our family to welcoming these two new babies, and a crime against my daughter or daughter-in-law would be absolutely devastating, and even more so because each is pregnant. We all agree on that.

That is the part that I do not get. We all do agree that we need to change the law to add penalties because a crime against a pregnant woman is really devastating. Why can we not agree on that? We have the Motherhood Protection Act, the Lofgren amendment, that does just that, it increases the penalties. It is not their bill or no bill. We could agree that we should increase the penalties.

I am happy to connect the dots for the gentleman on why this is an anti-abortion bill. It creates personhood for even a fertilized egg equal to that of a woman. That does not make any sense. Even if she does not know she is pregnant, that fertilized egg now has equal value to her.

We should create law that recognizes that this is a devastating crime, and we should increase the penalties if my daughter or my daughter-in-law is violently assaulted. We agree on that.

Why do we not, then, move forward as a body in agreement that we should pass this amendment? It does not detract. In fact, it increases the deterrent against violence against women at a time when more violence than other times occurs. Pregnancy is an incentive for violence against women. That is when it occurs more.

Let us get together and pass the Lofgren amendment.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Ohio (Mrs. JONES).